

# PADAM – FORMLESS SELF

*Let there be peace and love among all beings of the universe.*

**OM Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.**

*The radiance of consciousness-bliss in the form of one Awareness shining in the same way within and without is the Supreme and blissful primal Reality whose form is silence and which is declared by enlightened sages [jnanis] to be the final and incontrovertible state of true knowledge.*

*Let us fix our thoughts only upon the perfection of Shivam,  
formless, motionless, free of all attributes,  
flourishing as the form of true knowledge [jnana]  
that possesses in abundance a unique Excellence  
which may never be thwarted  
by the unreal bondage of the world's illusion,  
as the Fullness whose nature is silence [mauna],  
and as that whose Majesty shall never be dimmed.*

*Let us fix our thoughts upon the Absolute Perfection  
whose nature is the silence that never perishes,  
that exists as the surpassing purity of Grace's expanse,  
as the Truth of the Self that shines within the Heart  
as indestructible jnana for those who, entering the Heart,  
know the "I", having abandoned the pathways of the five senses.*

## **The nature of Padam**

- 1.** That which is known as Padam is never limited. It is complete Perfection, the form of pure consciousness.
- 2.** Padam, the very form of the Real, stands united with, and undifferentiated from, the multitude of living beings, whether they realise it or not.
- 3.** The special quality of Reality, Padam, is that it exists universally within all things, shining its light.
- 4.** Padam, whose equal disposition to all is unfailingly pure, is the harmony underlying all contradictions.
- 5.** Padam, remaining solitary, is the shining of Truth, the possessor of the victory that has nothing standing in opposition to it.

6. Padam, one's true nature, shines without becoming the body as the fiery flame of jnana, the [real] import of "I".

7. Padam is the extremely commonplace swarupa that exists as one's own nature. It is wrong even to say that it is easy to attain.

*The word "commonplace" here indicates that swarupa, one's real nature, is not something rare, special or elevated. It is one's ordinary, natural state. Padam is not therefore something to be "reached" or "attained"; it is one's true and already existing state of being.*

8. The effulgent Padam is pure jnana, the Atma-swarupa [the true nature of one's own Self] that is devoid of jiva-nature [individuality], the mental delusion that thinks, "I am bound".

*Swarupa and Atma-swarupa are key terms in Padamalai. Atma denotes the Self and swarupa can be translated as "real nature" or "real form". The word swarupa also occurs frequently by itself, not qualified by Atma. The two terms are mostly interchangeable, since they both denote the reality of the Self, but if a distinction is to be made, I would say, that Atma-swarupa denotes the Self shining as "I" whereas swarupa denotes the underlying reality that pervades and supports all manifestation. One should not pursue this difference too far, though, since Muruganar would often allow the metre of contents of the poem, rather than philosophical exactitude, to determine which of the two terms he used? Bhagavan himself often did not make any distinction between the various words that denote the Self [mauna, the Heart, Brahman and so on] preferring instead to see them all as synonyms for the same fundamental reality.*

*Jiva, sometimes translated as "soul", is the individual self. When it associates with the mind and identifies with it, it loses the knowledge that its true nature is the underlying reality, the Self.*

9. Padam, the real, exists and shines as the ever-present void without arising from anything and without giving rise to anything.

10. Padam is the form of the true Self, existing so firmly that it can neither be lost nor gained.

11. Though Padam exists, pervading each and every object within and without, none of them ever exist in it.

12. Padam's abode is the Heart that shines, pervading the whole world with its light.

### **Padam, the Heart**

*The Heart, a translation of the Tamil word ullam, is a synonym for the Self. When it is used, it denotes the Self as the centre of one's being, as the place where reality shines, and the*

*place from where all manifestation, whether physical or mental, arises. It does not denote a particular location.*

**13.** Padam is the consciousness, the Self that shines in the Heart as the motionless magnetic mountain.

**14.** The Heart is the holy sanctum sanctorum in which Padam resides. Those with deceptive minds cannot bow down and see it.

*Entrances to the inner shrines of temples have very low roofs. Those who cannot bend low, an action that is equated with humility or with a general subsidence of the mind, cannot pass through the entrance.*

**Bhagavan:** Only humility can destroy the ego. The ego keeps you far away from God. The door to God is open, but the lintel is very low. To enter one has to bend.

**15.** Padam shines as the Supreme light in the Heart when the light of the [individual] self is merged inseparably in the Self, the Supreme, which is the source of that light.

**20.** Padam, the non-dual light of Truth, abides neither knowing nor being known.

**21.** True Padam, the expanse of consciousness, abides, shining out as pure consciousness, beyond both knowledge and ignorance.

**22.** Padam, pure consciousness, demands that everything that has been learned as knowledge has to be completely forgotten as ignorance.

**Guru Vachaka Kovai, strophe 147, Pozhippurai:** Through one's great love of learning one may, with great enthusiasm, learn the jnana scriptures, thinking, "These books, which are the basis for attaining the clarity of immaculate jnana, are certainly worth knowing". Later, when one attains maturity and attempts to sink into the source, one will definitely have to forget completely the scriptural knowledge which, with great effort, one previously learned and mastered.

**23.** Padam, the perfect treasure of true jnana, is the Truth that cannot be known by the false manliness, the ego that arrogantly cavorts about.

**24.** Beauteous Padam, which is true knowledge, the exalted tapas of still silence, will destroy empirical knowledge, which is multifarious.

*Tapas is generally defined as being "an intense spiritual effort, often involving some sort of bodily mortification, whose aim is to burn off spiritual impurities". Bhagavan sometimes remarked that abidance in mauna, though it may look like a state of effortless quietude, is in fact a state of intensely focused activity. The "exalted tapas of mauna" is explained in the following extract:*

**Question :** Is the state of "being still" a state involving effort or effortless?

**Bhagavan :** It is not an effortless state of indolence. All mundane activities, which are ordinarily called effort, are performed with the aid of a portion of the mind and with frequent breaks. But the act of communion with the Self [Atma vyavahara] or remaining still inwardly is intense activity which is performed with the entire mind and without break. Maya, which cannot be destroyed by any other act, is completely destroyed by this intense activity which is called "mauna".

25. Clarifying doubt and wrong understanding through direct knowledge, Padam comes forward and shines, making the world recede.

### **The light of Padam**

26. Padam, the Truth, shines in the Heart by its own light, with no other light whatsoever existing apart from it.

27. Only Padam, the light of consciousness, knows the true import of aham [the source of "I"], which shines as that light.

*The Sanskrit word aham is usually translated as "I", but in Tamil the word is also sometimes used to denote the Heart, the source of the "I". Bhagavan generally used the Tamil word ullam when he spoke or wrote about the Heart as a synonym for the Self. When other words are used, they can sometimes be translated as "mind". Occasionally, these alternative words imply "heart" in a general sense, implying the centre of emotions and feelings.*

28. The light of Padam is the Supreme light, the Truth that reveals all other lights as illusory, and causes them to disappear.

**Bhagavan :** To know an object an ordinary light inimical to darkness is needed. To know the Self a light is needed, which lights both light and darkness. This light is neither light nor darkness. But it is called light, because by it they are known. This light is the Self, the infinite consciousness, of which no one is unaware.

29. Lustrous Padam, Shiva-jnana, shines in such a way that the siddhi yoga [yogic attainment] that is associated with the whirling confusion of the mind is revealed as false and ceases to be.

*Bhagavan taught that yogic attainments [yoga siddhis] can only be attained and sustained by effort, and that when the effort lapses, the "attainment" disappears. True jnana, on the other hand, is the natural and effortless state that remains when the mind and all its activities have been eradicated. Siva-jnana is the mind-free natural state, whereas yoga siddhi is an unreal mental state. This distinction will be further elaborated on in the chapter entitled "Advice on Sadhana".*

30. That good and great light is Padam, the utter Perfection with which the mind that experiences the non-dual Self has coalesced.

### **Padam, the support of the world appearance**

37. All things exist depending on Padam, but Padam has no desire whatsoever for any of those things.

38. Padam, the surging brilliance of the real, is the centre for the spinning of the seven worlds, which revolve like a millstone [around its axis].

39. Padam, the supporting screen, is the true light that projects this entire universe as a host of shadows, and then rotates them.

*The rotation of the crowd of shadows is a cinematic metaphor that explains the appearance of the world in terms of a projector whose film spools rotate, causing images of lights and shadows to be projected on a screen. The same model of creation was used by Bhagavan in Arunachala Ashtakam, verse six:*

You, the Heart, the light of consciousness, the one reality, alone exist! A wonderful sakti [power] exists in you, which is not other than you. From [this sakti rise] a series of atom-like shadow thoughts which, by means of consciousness in the whirl of prarabdha, are seen as shadowy world pictures, both inside on the mirror of the thought-light, and outside through the senses, such as the eyes, in the same way that a cinema picture comes into existence via a lens. O Hill of Grace! Whether they stop or whether they continue, they do not exist apart from you.

40. Whilst being the unique support that sustains the whole world, Padam, the ever-present Self, is without any support whatsoever.

41. Since the entire world appearance is founded in due order upon it, jnanis praise the effulgent Padam, the Truth, as Padam [the feet, the ultimate support].

42. Because it bears and sustains the whole world, the completely perfect being-consciousness is termed Padam.

43. The splendid, effulgent Padam is the source not only for things seen [idam] but also for the false "I" that is indispensable for the idam.

*Bhagavan sometimes spoke of idam and aham, the things that are seen and the "I" that sees them. Here he is saying that Padam is the source that underlies them both.*

### **Padam, moving and unmoving**

44. Padam remains within as the imperishable, unmoving axle that spins this world like a wheel.

45. Padam is the Self Supreme, the perfect Truth. Activity is possible only at the conceptual level.

**Question:** In the third mantra of the *Isavasyopanishad* it says: "Brahman moves and Brahman does not move." How can these two contradictory truths both be within Brahman?

**Bhagavan:** The truth of not doing anything is the truth of one's real nature. Action or doing can only be seen from a relative point of view.

**Question:** You have often said, and the books also say, that Brahman is immobile. Now you say it is all-powerful. Does it not then move?

**Bhagavan:** Power implies movement. Though Iswara moves by his own power [sakti], which is movement, he transcends the movement. He is achala [motionless], atita [transcendent] .

46. Padam confounds the eye of those who lack true understanding of Reality by appearing to be in rapid motion, whilst [in fact] it steadfastly abides without moving at all.

*Sri Ramana Gita, chapter 12, verse 15:* Though the supreme moves because of his own supreme sakti, he is in reality unmoving. Only the sage can understand this profound mystery.

47. Padam performs unreal activities with such great skill that they appear to be real.

48. The extremely wonderful Padam performs all activities just like the mind does, without swerving from its nature as consciousness.

*In the verse from Arunachala Ashtakam that "I" cited in the preceding section, Bhagavan explained how sakti, the dynamic aspect of the Self, brings manifestation into existence and sustains it. Padam, the unmanifest Self, is the support and ground for this manifestation, but it plays no direct part in creation. However, as this verse indicates, since sakti cannot be regarded as being different or apart from Padam, it is also true to say that Padam performs all the activities of the world. This same paradox was also brought out in the final line of Arunachala Ashtakam, verse six: "Whether they stop or whether they continue, they do not exist apart from you."*

*Muruganar, one of the closest disciples of Ramana Maharshi, wrote this text under the inspiration of his master. Ramana Maharshi considered him as a jnani.*